Title Page

Diverging Identities: A 'Contextualised' Exploration of the Interplay of Competing Discourses in Two Saudi University classrooms

by

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Abstract

There has been considerable debate in recent years and criticism levelled both from inside and outside sources at the English curriculum in Saudi Arabia (Al-Ahaydib, 1996; Al-Eid, 2000; Al-Hazmi, 2003; Al-Khazim, 2003; Al-Qahatani, 2003; Al-Asmari, 2008; Alamri, 2008; Elyas, 2009a, 2009b). As the future English school teachers, Saudi University students studying English in Saudi higher institutions and the pedagogies employed by their lecturers are of particular interest in this regard. Some work has been done on Arabic students studying English in other Gulf countries (Al-Balushi, 1999; Al-Brashi, 2003; Syed, 2003; Al-Issa, 2005, Clarke, 2006, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2009, 2010), on the social-cultural aspects of attitudes towards learning English as a language and the effect of English culture(s) on Saudi Arabian students and teachers (Al-Ahaydib, 1996; Al-Jarf, 2004, Al-Hag & Samdi, 1996; Al-Qahatani, 2003; Al-Asmari, 2008, Elyas, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c). However, a detailed unpacking of the different cultural influences (both Islamic and Western), and how they are evidenced in policy documents, curriculum, textbooks and pedagogy, remains relatively unexplored (Elyas, 2009b). In addition, the effect of the various influences on the teachers' professional identities, and the students' learning identities has not been dealt with prior to this thesis.

The thesis employs a multi-facetted approach drawing on the areas of identity theory, narrative theory, motivation theory and Critical Discourse Analysis in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the target and sensitive topic. The design of this research is based on a case study of two university English classes (including both teachers and students) of a particular university in Saudi Arabia. The data include transcription of focus groups

discussions, in-depth interviews with the teachers, policy documents, curriculum and textbooks, surveys of students' attitude towards the English language and culture, classroom observations and student's written narrative of their ESL stories. Data analysis methods include Critical Discourse Analysis, narrative theory, thematic analysis according to axes of identity and power (Foucault, 1997a, 1997d, 1980, 1983b, 1984, 1997; Gee, 1996, 2002, May, 2005; O'Leary, 2002), motivation theories, and statistical analysis of the quantitative data.

This thesis shows that, although the characterization of English teaching as operating with a "clash of civilization" (Huntington, 1993, 1997, Ratnawati, 2005) is perhaps too simplistic, a clear distinction can be made between opposing cultural forces which cause conflict in the Saudi Arabian University teaching and learning environment. This thesis provides a unique insight into the interplay of competing "Discourses" (Gee, 1999, p.7) within this context.

Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary to Tariq Elyas and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968. The author acknowledges that copyright of published works contained within this thesis (as listed below*) resides with the copyright holder(s) of those works. I also give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library catalogue and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

*Elyas, T. (2007). *To be or not to be Americanized: The Attitude and the Impact of the American English as a Global Language within the Saudi Education System*. Paper presented at the Conference on Becoming a World Language: the growth of Chinese, English and Spanish. City University of Hong Kong, The Halliday Centre for Intelligent Applications of Language Studies.

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*Elyas, T. (2008c). *Identities and relations in pedagogy: The socio-cultural meanings and micro politics of classroom interactions from a Saudi perspective.* Paper presented at the ACTA Inaugural International TESOL Conference 2008

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*Elyas, T., & Picard, M. (2010). Saudi Arabian Educational History: Impacts on English Language Teaching. *Education, Business and Society: Contemporary Middle Eastern Issues, 3*(2), 136-145.

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Tariq Elyas

Dedication

This thesis, and all the achievement throughout the years of my PhD candidature, is dedicated to my loving memory of my mother Nawal Murad who always wished me to do my best to achieve the highest possible level of education. Her memory has inspired me throughout the years to strive for my goals. Also, I dedicate this thesis to my dear loving father who has always been there to support me in my journey in every way possible. Without his encouraging words, this thesis wouldn't be complete.

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Definition of Terms

"*AAFAQ":* Horizon- A KSA project targeted higher educational development schemes.

"Assalamu Alaikum": The Muslim greeting which literally means 'May the blessings of Allah be upon you.

*"*ALM*":* Audio-lingual Method.

"ARAMCO": The Arabian American Oil Company.

"*Burkah":* A head-to-cover for women in Islam

"CDCD": Curriculum Department Centre for Development

"CDCO": Curriculum Department at the Central Office.

"CLT": Communicative Language Teaching.

"COLT": Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching.

"Dupatta": A long scarf.

"ELD": European Languages Department.

"EFL" English as a Foreign Language.

"ESL": English as a Second Language.

"ELT: English Language Teaching.

"FH": Freedom House.

"*Figh*": Islamic jurisprudence.

"FLI": Foreign language instruction.

"*Jandriah*": A festival held in the capital Riyadh.

"*Hadith*": Prophet Mohammed's saying.

"*Hajj*": One of the 'five pillars' of Islam which is required by all Muslims to be fulfilled.

"*Halaqa*": A learning classroom in early Islamic period.

"*Haraam*": Forbidden taboos in Islamic Culture.

"*Hijab*": A head scarf worn by women in Islamic societies.

"IBE": International Bureau of Education.

"IGA": Institute for Gulf Affairs.

"IMPACT-SE": The Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education.

"*INSHALLAH*": Allah willing.

"IVA": Institute for American Values.

"GTM": Grammar Translation Method.

"GCDCD": General Director of Curriculum Department Centre for Development.

"GDP": Gross Domestic Product.

"KAU": King Abdulla Aziz University.

"KSA": Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

"*Kuttab*": Primary school-religious classrooms held at the mosque.

"LANE": A term is used for English courses at ELD, KAU.

"L1": First Language.

"L2": Second Language.

"*Madrassa*": School of higher learning.

"MoE": Ministry of Education.

"NP": Narrative Prompt.

"*Sharia*": Islamic Law.

"ST": Student.

"*Tajwid*": Conventions of Qur'anic recitation, a course taught at public schools at KSA as part of its educational system

"*Tafsir*": Qur'anic Interpretation, a course taught at KSA public schools as part of its educational system.

"*Takfir*": Accusations of apostasy against other Muslims.

"*Tash Ma Tash*": A local Saudi comedy program usually aired during the Ramadan.

"*Tatweer*": Modernization- A term used to identify the modernization movement in Education in KSA post 9/11.

"*Tawhid*": The concept of monotheism in Islam.

"TESOL": Teaching English as Second Language.

"TEFL": Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

"TGOCDP": General Objectives for Curriculum Development Program.

"*Ramadan*": Fasting a whole month for religious reasons.

"UK": United Kingdom.

"*Ulama*": Muslim scholars

"USA": United States of America.

"PBL": Problem-based Learning.

"PBUH": Prophet Mohammed-peace be upon him.

"*Qur'an*": The Holy book of Muslims.